

Notes from the District 7 -Community Meeting  
10-Ten year Strategy to End Homelessness  
City of Long Beach

**Date:** Wednesday October 19, 2005  
**Time:** 5:30 – 7:30 PM  
**Location:** Health and Human Services West Facility  
2125 Santa Fe, City of Long Beach, 7<sup>th</sup> District (Tonia Reyes Uranga,  
Council Member)

**Opening Remarks:**

Don went over speaker cards and explained how the two- Part discussion would take place today.

Don opened by explaining the "10 yr strategy". Don explained the forms on the table and encouraged any and all input from the audience is encouraged be it today or during the weeks to come. All input is compiled and is sent to the Steering Committee via the working group. The steering Committee then forwards the information to City Council.

Don introduced Council Member Tonia Reyes Uranga #7 District.

Don explained that there are approximately 200 cities completing the 10-year strategy to end homelessness. Pasadena was the first in Southern California to have finished and implemented a 10-year plan.

Councilwoman Uranga said that she feels we need to come up with a strategy to prevent homelessness. She feels there needs to be more money for the housing fund. It is important to decrease the length of homelessness for each household. We also need to provide community based services and support to accomplish these plans so that once they are no longer homeless they can remain that way. People need to be challenged to think creatively outside the box to make this happen.

Don explained the goal of Focus Group is to identify ISSUES, SOLUTIONS & STRATEGIES.

Antoine: My homelessness has helped me find out who I am in life.

Richard Hart - Mental Health Worker at the Villages: Stated his biggest issues are not enough "affordable housing". There is also a large increase of drug and alcohol use. I do feel Mental Health issues are being adequately attacked. Another one of the biggest issues is lack of shelter space. We get from 40-60 clients a day wanting to shower. We have one shower. When they have to wait hours for a shower it causes more problems...it gets crazy. I love the 10-year plan ideas and believe it will take the community to get it to work.

Tonia Reyes: We need to develop a housing plan with input of homeless advocates. But we are really missing the boat if we do not address the low-income issues. There does not seem to be integrated strategies. Agencies need to come together to meet the needs. There are many reasons for homelessness. We need to focus in on 4 or 5 of those reasons specifically. Integrate with other groups all to be a part of the solution.

Laura Sanchez - Member of the LB Coalition of the Homeless: stated she feels there needs to be more education to people who are homeless, too much focus on the successful people. She is very discouraged with this.

Jack Smith: stated he was given this figure and doesn't know if the number given is right but he was told there were something like 87 active plans in the city of Long Beach. It seems to me that one of the Strategic Plans has to integrate with this Plan.

Josh Goade - Catholic Charities: explained there really is no profit in intervention. He sees many people go from shelter to housing but they cannot maintain it. We have to address affordable housing or the cycle will continue forever. There needs to be some sort of profit for agencies to want to help with affordable housing.

Gary: explained that with the Housing Trust Fund people have made a plan to help low income but by the time the money reaches the "public" the issues are no longer current. It has to be set up for people and their issues today. Long Beach has worked up in scale to the point where we cannot even touch the funds. One reason we have Chronic issues in the "mental health" field is because of decisions made 20-25 years ago. Can we replace or reverse the policies to address the clients' needs today?

Annette: Affordable housing is supposed to be for people who make \$20,000 or less a year. But it's not set up to address this population. These people cannot afford an apartment. It's instead going to people of \$60,000 a year and they can afford housing. One homeless man said at one of our other meetings "WHY SHOULD I GET A JOB IT WON'T LEAD TO HOUSING?"

Maybe we need to look more at helping to provide more childcare. At \$20,000-\$30,000 a year you cannot afford childcare let alone housing.

Don: In New York they gathered about 5,000 homeless and did a study. They discovered they saved \$16,000 by putting them into housing. The areas of focus across the country is PREVENTION...catching it before it goes that far, CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS...those who are disabled and homeless for over 3 years, TRANSITIONAL HOUSING...homeless due to lost jobs or rent increasing etc. HOUSING FIRST MODEL...getting off the street into homes, COORDINATED CASE MANAGEMENT...wrap around services to help client maintain stability.

Jack: asked if you are not homeless for 3 yrs or disabled you are not labeled "chronic"?

Don: replied that is correct they are not considered chronic right now.

Laura Sanchez: asked how is this focus you were speaking of funded?

Don: replied that they redirect resources. Federal Gov. is putting money out there for people. SRO's are coming back.

Richard: stated we are helping people get into housing but it on a small scale. We need to enlarge our assistance.

Don: asked what other strategies would you like to see...let's talk about Homeless Prevention...

Gary: stated I don't see how we are going to suddenly drop to 0. But more importantly we need to anticipate homelessness. Get prepared before we get hit with it. Plan early.

Don: asked so what can we do to prevent...

Josh: stated prevent evictions. Eviction Prevention Money is one of the areas I operate at Catholic Charities. I do not put money into landlord's pockets if I do not have to.

Don: asked so do we need more prevention money?

Corrine: stated that very little money is in this plan. There needs to be more priority in the Legislation to open funds.

Jack: stated Laws have to change to make that happen. It's really not an attitude issues it is the laws need to change.

Annette: stated we really need to see more of the younger adults who leave foster homes being cared for. These kids who leave foster or group homes are left without anywhere to go. No education which ultimately leads to homelessness. Maybe we could set up some kind of Student Housing so when they have to leave their homes because of their age they could go right into this housing and start to get an education.

Jack: stated Social Services claim to know when kids are being released. They know what to do to help these kids and DCFS is supposed to be coordinated with the foster homes to help them set up a plan for when they graduate.

Laura: explained there are private programs out there that help kids learn how to save money. They help them set goals and plan for their release. They of course cannot force kids to participate but they are strongly encouraged to in order to have a plan for their graduation. But one of the problems is caseload. Time is not only spent with the client but their families and then all the paper work. There are not enough workers for all the loads.

Jill: explained that she had a kid that she took in to her house and was trying to help him get on his feet from a foster home but he was unwilling to do anything to help himself. He was so uneducated coming out of this Home he didn't want to save money or even able to keep a job. But there is a sum of money that goes to the family for the foster child and in this case the family did not save any of it for him when he left. They spent it all. I think that the social services instead of giving it to the family need to set up an account of some sort so the foster family does not have access to it and it will be there for the child accumulating for when he leaves.

Richard: stated that he thinks many workers need to be more proactive and go out into the community. They do not want to really do too much and we need more proactive workers! Train case managers to make it happen! Our agency helps from ages 18-25. We also don't call our clients "clients". We call them "members". We feel it makes them feel better about getting help.

Gary: explained early diagnosis is a real key. The early indications need to be identified with the young people. Have resources easily marked and identified. I think we need to look more into homelessness culturally. Who has the least amount of homeless? What is that culture doing to prevent themselves from becoming homeless and copy their plans so to speak?

Jill: stated many people become homeless because of the rent. There needs to be some kinds of rent control. There has to be apartments again for \$400.00 a month.

Don: stated rent is coming up everywhere tonight. And it's hard to get the landlords out there to hear this is a problem.

Fern: asked are landlords allowed to ask renters if they are under \$30,000...and rent to only them just as some are requiring over \$30,000?

Corrine: explained that yes it's the same as long as you don't attack race, sexual orientation etc. you can ask whatever.

Josh: stated there has to be some way to get Agencies to want to do this with their rentals. There has to be a "profit concept" somehow in a campaign.

Don: stated with all the ideas you really need to central headquarters that promotes these ideas.

Gary: explained San Diego has a "Housing ZARE". Maybe we need to look into what they have done and use their ideas. They created 6,000 new housing units.

Annette: suggested that maybe we can encourage homeowners to use their tax money towards the homeless cause. Have some sort of incentive for homeowners who wish to do this.

Laura: stated maybe this comment has more to do with prevention than a solution but people need to be encouraged to "help themselves" they have to not "expect" the Gov. to do everything for them. They need to do things to promote their self-esteem and confidence to get what they need to find a home for themselves. I know there are some people who cannot but there are those who really need a little push and need to make more effort on their part.

Don: stated so we need to provide more tools. If you only do a hand out they will end up homeless again. Maybe have them sign a social contract to hold them more accountable.

Jill: asked how do you "end" homelessness if you cannot end the issues of drug and alcohol problems. We will never end homelessness until we hold if they are not forced to take responsibility. It's a double-edged sword. People in AA struggle every day but they have to do the work to help themselves. People don't want to work a "menial job" but everyone has to start somewhere. They figure they will never catch up so they give up before they try. Often times you offer someone food and they refuse it. They want money to buy alcohol. I don't want to help that person and our tax money shouldn't have to go to help this kind of person. But it really is a double-edged sort of problem.

Gary: explained 4 or 5 years ago I took a tour of SRO's. This agency was using the "Housing First" program, which means they address the housing issue "first". But they do not address the alcohol or drugs until after the housing issues are addressed. This Agency used both models...dealing with alcohol and having them deal with that first and the Housing First where the address housing then the other problems. I do not know how their success rate is.

Don: stated that I think everyone agrees that if you are going to receive assistance you need to be taught how to maintain.

Gary: stated I don't know if we will ever be able to totally solve the homeless problem and I feel we need to at some point be okay with that.

Corrine: explained that Philadelphia uses the idea of offering housing and if after they decline the assistance after 3 attempts it becomes a criminal problem. But you have to have the housing to be able to offer it.

Josh: explained the clients I find most successful are the ones I have the highest expectations of. I hold them accountable and I don't chase them with a Kleenex. If they miss an appointment I don't just set one up right away. They have to wait a little. I hold them accountable for all I ask or expect of them in helping themselves.

Jill: stated I feel you need to help the ones you are going to be most productive get help first. We need to help them get moved quickly to the next level.

Fern: asked are all of the Agencies who meet to talk about the Homelessness sharing notes with each other? Does everyone know what everyone else is talking about?

Don: stated the notes from this meeting are on the web site. Anyone can go there to read the minutes any time.

Meeting was then adjourned.